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No 22

*The Characters of an Apostolical Church  
fulfilled in the Church of England: And our  
Obligations to continue in the Communion  
of it.*

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
A  
S E R M O N  
Preached in the  
Church of *Petersfield*,  
IN THE  
County of *Southampton*,  
*June* the 17<sup>th</sup>, 1722.

By WILLIAM LOWTH, B. D.  
Rector of that Parish, and Prebendary of  
*Winchester*.

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*Published at the Request of several of the Principal  
Inhabitants that heard it.*

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L O N D O N:   
Printed for R. and J. BONWICK, at the Red Lyon  
in St. Paul's Churchyard. M,DCC,XXII.

(Price Four-pence.)

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To my much respected Friends,  
the Inhabitants of the Bo-  
rough of PETERSFIELD.



*Need not acquaint you with the Occasion of preaching the following Discourse. Those that set up a separate Congregation in your Town, thought fit to publish the Sermon which was preached at the Opening of their Meeting-House, and to disperse it among you.*

*I should have been wanting in my Duty, if I had not used my best Endeavour to preserve you in the Communion of our Church, since they have been so industrious to draw you away from it. The Sermon I preached upon that Subject, you were pleased to think might be more useful, if it were Printed, and you had thereby an Opportunity of Reading and*



*Considering it at your Leisure. I was willing to comply with your Desire in that Particular; and that it may in some Measure attain the End for which it was both Preached and Published, viz. to persuade Men to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, is the hearty Prayer of*

Your affectionate

Friend and Servant,

WILLIAM LOWTH.



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## A C T S II. 42.

*And they continued stedfastly in the  
Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship,  
and in Breaking of Bread and in  
Prayers.*



**A**MONG all the Parties that  
distract the Christian Profession,  
there are none that can lay any  
just Claim to that honourable  
Title, but look upon the Doctrine  
and Practice of the *Apostles* as the Standard  
of the Christian Religion, and seem willing  
to appeal to their Judgment in Cases of Dif-  
ficulty.

In the Words of the Text, we have a brief  
Description of the State of the Primitive  
Church as it was planted by the Apostles :  
when it consisted only of an *Hundred and*  
† *twenty*

*twenty Persons<sup>a</sup>, who were the constant Disciples and Followers of Christ, and about Three thousand more<sup>b</sup>, converted by one Sermon of St. Peter's; of these it is said, that they continued stedfastly in the Apostles Doctrine and Fellowship, and in Breaking of Bread and in Prayers.*

From which Words I shall enquire,

First, *What was the State of the Church of Christ in the Apostles Days.*

Secondly, *What Church at this Time answers the Characters here given of a Primitive and Apostolical Church.*

First, *Here is a Description of the State or Condition of the Apostolical Church*, consisting of these four *Tokens* or Characters: First, In their continuing in the *Apostles Doctrine*. Secondly, In *their Fellowship*, or living in a strict Union and Communion with them. Thirdly, In their *partaking together of the Lord's Supper*. And, Fourthly, In *joyning in the other Parts of the Publick Worship of God*.

1. The first Mark of a Primitive and Apostolical Church is, its Members *Continuance in the Doctrine of the Apostles*.

The Church is a Society of true Believers entered into Covenant with God, of which Christ is the Mediator. It is described by

<sup>a</sup> Acts i. 15.

<sup>b</sup> Acts ii. 41.

St. Paul as the *House or Temple of God*, built upon the *Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets*, *Jesus Christ himself being the head Corner-stone*, Eph. ii. 20. Elsewhere Christ is called by the same Apostle the *Foundation*, 1 Cor. iii. 11. from whence it follows, that in order to our Admittance into this Society, we must explicitly believe all that Christ has done and suffered for our Redemption; who, according to the eternal Purpose and Decree of his Father, came down from Heaven, and voluntarily <sup>c</sup> undertook the Work of our Redemption, making himself an Atonement for the Sins of Mankind: and is thereby become the *Author of eternal Salvation to all that believe and obey him*, and expect to be saved, not for any Works of Righteousness which they can perform, but only thro' his all-sufficient Merits.

This is that *Form of sound Words*, or true Doctrine, mentioned by St. Paul in his Epistle to the *Romans*, Chap. vi. 17. and in his second Epistle to *Timothy*, Chap. i. 13. the explicit Belief of which was required from those who were converted to the Christian Religion in order to their Baptism; who are thereupon said to be *Baptized into Christ*; that is, into the Faith and Service of Christ, and the Profession of that Religion which he came into the World to reveal as the Will of his heavenly Father, and the only ordinary



Means of Salvation. And from hence the ancient *Creeds*, or Formularies of Faith took their Original; differing perhaps as to the manner of Expression in several Churches, but agreeing in Sense; and containing a Summary of the Fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith<sup>d</sup>.

The Foundation concerning *Jesus Christ*, and the Redemption wrought by him being thus laid, Believers were still to go forward to Perfection, and to be thoroughly instructed in all that the Gospel requires of them to know and practice in order to their Salvation. The Sum of which Doctrine is contained in the Writings of the *New Testament*, wherein is declared to us *the whole Counsel of God*: they being written for this End, that *Men might believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing they might have Life thro' his Name*, John xx. 31. This is the first Mark or Character of a true Apostolical Church, their *Continuance in the Doctrine of the Apostles*.

From what has been said upon this Head, we may judge how far the Characters of an Apostolical Church agree to that of *Rome*: the Missionaries of that Church are always

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<sup>d</sup> One of the chief of these is that which is commonly call'd the Apostles Creed, either because it contains a Summary of the Doctrine which the Apostles taught; or else because it was received in the Roman Church, which Church was known in the Western Parts of Christendom by the Name of the Apostolical Church; as being founded by the Apostles St. Peter and St. Paul. See Dr. Wall of Infant Baptism. Part 2. Chap. 9.

making loud Boasts of the uninterrupted Succession of their Church from the very Apostles; and that they derive their Authority from *St. Peter*, the Rock upon which Christ built his Church. But then they are very deficient in making out that they have kept that *Faith which was at first delivered to the Saints*, which is the most essential Note of a true Church: for there can be no true Faith without the Authority of Divine Revelation, which can't be produced for several Doctrines of the Church of *Rome*, as some of their own Writers \* have ingenuously acknowledged.

II. The *second* Character of an Apostolical Church is their living in a strict Union and *Fellowship with the Apostles*: They continued in the *Fellowship* as well as the *Doctrine of the Apostles*; that is, they continued Members of that Body or Society which Christ had placed under their Government.

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\* I shall instance in Two of the most distinguishing Doctrines of the Roman Faith: The first is that of the Pope's Supremacy, concerning which Bellarmine himself acknowledges that the Pope's succeeding *St. Peter* in his Primacy, can't be prov'd to be of Divine Right. See Bellarm. de Pontifice Rom. lib. 2. c. 12. §. Observandum secundo.

The second is that of Transubstantiation, concerning which the same Bellarmine (de Euch. lib. 3. c. 23.) confesses that the great Schoolman Scotus was of Opinion that this Doctrine could not be proved from Scripture. The same was the Opinion of several other learned Men of that Church, whose Authorities are quoted in Archbishop Tillotson's Discourse against Transubstantiation, p. 5. and in a Preface to a Discourse of the Eucharist, formerly published by his present Grace of Canterbury.

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The Unity of the Church does not consist in a bare Communion of Faith and Love, as our *Dissenters* pretend, but likewise in a joint Participation of the outward Ordinances appointed by Christ to be observed in his Church. The former indeed is a Duty, but does not take in the whole Duty of Christians, which is to join together in outward Communion, as Members of the same Body: upon this account we are commanded not to forsake *the assembling of our selves together*, Heb. x. 25.

The Church in the Text is described as continuing not only in the Apostles *Doctrine*, but likewise in *outward Acts of Communion*.

The two Sacraments were appointed as publick Badges or Tokens of the Church's being a visible Body, and joining together in publick Acts of Communion: *By one Spirit are we all baptized into one Body*, 1 Cor. xii. 13. By the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, *we being many are one Bread and one Body*, 1 Cor. x. 17. St. Paul persuades Christians to endeavour to *keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace*, i. e. to preserve the inward Unity of Mind and Affection by the Ties and Bands of external Communion, Eph. iv. 3. and he does it by these Arguments; *there is one Body and one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, and one Baptism*; which reasoning plainly supposes that the Unity of the Church is founded upon external Bonds, such

such as are the publick Profession of one Faith at our Baptism, whereby we are admitted into the Body or Church of Christ, as well as an Internal Union with Christ and the holy Spirit. So when our Saviour so earnestly prays for Unity among Christians, *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they also may be one in us, that the World may believe that thou hast sent me*, John xvii. 21. it plainly follows from these Expressions, that the Manifestation of Unity among Christians, ought to be by outward Acts of Communion: for how else could it be taken notice of by the World, or be made an Argument to persuade Unbelievers, *that God was in them of a Truth?*

And how absurd is it, and contrary to Experience, for those that separate from our Church, to pretend that they maintain Christian Love and Charity with it, while they disparage its Constitution, and endeavour to draw away as many as they can from its Communion, break it to pieces by Schisms and Factions, and thereby make way for *Popery* to prevail among us; whose Design it has all along been<sup>c</sup>, to foment Divisions

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<sup>c</sup> 'Tis notorious that Comin and Heath, two Popish Priests, were the first setters up of extempore Prayers in England, in the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's Reign. See a Book intitled, Foxes and Firebrands, printed 1680. and since that Time there can Instances be given of Popish Priests preaching in separate Meetings, and some of them instructed in Handicraft Trades, and trained up to dispute, one for Presbytery.



visions among us, that so they may at length destroy us?

And whatever Opinion some weak and ignorant Persons may have entertained of our Church, as if it were inclined to Popery, the Papists themselves have other Thoughts of it, and look upon the Establish'd Church as the most formidable Enemy they have, and thereby are unwearied in their Attempts to weaken and destroy it: And when *Popery* was upon the *Throne*, the Divines of the *Church of England* gave the most remarkable Check to it by their Preaching and Writing, and prevented its making any considerable Progress in the Nation.

In order to build up Christians in their holy Faith, and assist them in joining together in publick Acts of Worship, our Lord Jesus Christ appointed *some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the Work of the Ministry, and for the edifying of the Body of Christ*, Eph. iv. 10. These he invested with the same Authority which his Father had given to him: *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*, John xx. 21. and, *he that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me*<sup>e</sup>.

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bytery, another for Independency, a third for Anabaptism, a fourth for Quakerism; so that when the deluded People thought they had heard a gifted Tradesman, they have heard a Romish Priest in that Disguise.

<sup>e</sup> Luke x. 16.

He gave unto them the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven ; not indeed to let Men in, or shut them out arbitrarily or at pleasure, or to give them an absolute *Dominion over Men's Faith* and Salvation ; but that looking upon themselves as *Stewards of the Mysteries of God*, they should be faithful Dispensers of his Word and Sacraments ; always remembering that they must give a strict Account of so sacred a Trust, to the supreme Pastor and *Bishop of Souls*.

And because *no Man could take upon him this Office, except he were sent* <sup>g</sup>, for a supply of their Mortality, the Apostles committed the same Trust to others ; and our Saviour promised to be with them and their Successors *unto the end of the World* <sup>h</sup>. So that whoever lives in the Fellowship and Communion of those who succeed the Apostles and first Teachers of the Church, continues in the Fellowship of the Apostles themselves.

We may justly conclude that all those great Privileges invested in the Apostles, or their Successors, did carry along with them some real Power and Authority over the People committed to their Charge. Accordingly, we find these Commands given by the Apostles to all Christians, *to obey those that have the Rule over them*, in spiritual things, and *submit themselves to their godly*

<sup>g</sup> Heb. v. 4. Rom. x. 15.

<sup>h</sup> Matth. xxviii. 20.

Instructions, as those that watch'd over their Souls, Heb. xiii. 17. The Christians of those Times look'd upon living in Communion with their Bishops and Pastors, as being in Communion with the Father and with his<sup>i</sup> Son Jesus Christ; they esteemed them very highly in Love for their Works sake<sup>k</sup>: and thought that disparaging the Office of the Priesthood, was indeed dishonouring Christ the High-Priest of our Profession. As Men had not then the Boldness to intrude themselves into the Ministerial Office; so those, who had a lawful Calling to that sacred Function, were treated as the Messengers of God, and Apostles of Christ himself.

III. I proceed now to consider the third Character the Text gives of an Apostolical Church, that they joined together in *Breaking of Bread*, that is, in partaking of the Lord's Supper, as that Expression commonly signifies in the New Testament<sup>l</sup>; being applied to that Holy Service from the *Feast of Charity*, which in those Times usually accompanied it. The Lord's Supper is the most distinguishing part of the Christian Worship, being instituted by Christ himself for a continual Remembrance of his Death, and the Benefits we receive thereby; that

<sup>i</sup> 1 Thess. v. 13.

<sup>k</sup> Ὅσοι θεοῦ εἰσὶν καὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ἔσται μετὰ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου εἰσὶν.  
As many as are of God and Jesus Christ, are in Communion with the Bishop. Ignatius, Epist. ad Philadelph. N. 3. Ignatius was a Disciple of the Apostles.

<sup>l</sup> Acts. xx. 7. 1 Cor. x. 16.



the frequent Commemoration of all that he has done and suffered for us might still put us in mind of our Obligations to devote our selves to his service, and to live to him that died for us. Accordingly, in the first Ages of Christianity, *when the Blood of Christ was warm upon the Hearts of Believers*, as St. *Jerom* speaks, the Celebration of the Lord's Supper was look'd upon as a necessary Part of the Christian Worship, which they performed *daily*, as we read *ver. 46.* of this Chapter; and for some Ages after the Times of the Apostles, never omitted it upon the Days of their publick and solemn Assemblies. So that most of the antient Writers, when they expound that Petition of the Lord's Prayer, *Give us this Day our daily Bread*, suppose this *Mystical* Sense implied in the Words, that we therein beg of God the daily Supply of our Spiritual Food in the Eucharist. It was an unheard-of thing in those Times, that any who called themselves Christians should come for Months and Years together to join in the Prayers and Sermon, and depart out of the Church, when the Lord's Supper was to be administred. They that had been guilty of such a Neglect or Contempt of Christ's Ordinances, by the Discipline of those Times would have been excluded from the Benefit of joining in the rest of the Publick Service, till they had paid a greater Regard to this, which was deservedly esteemed the Principal part of it.

But

But many of our *Dissenters* look upon *hearing Sermons* as the principal part of Religious Worship, and are not sensible of the Obligations lying upon all Christians frequently to remember the Death of Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

IV. The *fourth* Character by which the Apostolical Church is here described, is their joining together in *Publick Prayer*; or, as their Practice is fully expressed, *ver. 46. They continued daily with one Accord in the Temple, and in breaking of Bread from House to House*: or as the Phrase *κατ' οἶκον* properly signifies, *in the House*, that is, in that private Room where they assembled for that purpose. The Sense of the whole Verse amounting to this, They were constantly in the Temple at the publick Hours of Prayer, (as may appear from the beginning of the Third Chapter of the *Acts*, and other Places) and they superadded the Celebration of the Lord's Supper in their private Assemblies, as a peculiar Ordinance of the Christian Worship.

Thus, by their constant Attendance upon the several Parts of the Publick Worship, the first Christians testified their Communion with God, and with each other: that they *were one Body and one Spirit, of one Heart and of one Soul*, united to each other in one holy Bond of Truth and of Peace, of Faith and of Charity: *with one Mind and one Mouth glorifying God and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Christ*<sup>m</sup>. And such an Union we must never expect to see among Christians again, till Men come to have better Notions of their Obligations to maintain Church Communion, than a great many have at present among us.

II. I proceed now to the second Enquiry, *viz. What Church at this Time answers the Characters of a Primitive and Apostolical Church.* And if any Church which holds the same Doctrine, retains the same Government, joins in the same Sacraments, and other Parts of God's Worship, as they did in the Apostles Times, be a true Apostolical Church, we have cause to bless God, who hath made us Members of a Church, in which all these Characters and Means of Grace are to be found.

i. And first for its *Continuance in the Apostles Doctrine*: Our Church acknowledges the holy Scripture to be the only Rule of her Faith: and publickly declares, *Article the 6<sup>th</sup>, That nothing ought to be esteemed an Article of Faith, but what is contained therein, or may be proved thereby.* To this she constantly appeals upon all Occasions, and by this Determination desires to stand or fall. One plain Argument of the Deference she gives to the Word of God, is, that the

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<sup>m</sup> Rom. xv. 16.



Reading of it makes so considerable a Part of her publick Worship: and it may with great Truth be affirmed, that there is more of the Scriptures read in *our Church every Week*, than is in many *separate Assemblies* throughout the *whole Year*. And because there arise great Disputes among the several Sects and Parties about the Sense of the Scriptures, our Church pays a particular Regard in this Case to the Judgment of the *Primitive Church*, as having a peculiar Advantage, by being so near the Times of the Apostles, of knowing the Sense of their Writings: what was publicly professed and taught by themselves, and those that succeeded them in the Office of governing and instructing Christians; and likewise being the most competent *Witness* of their Practice, and in what Order or Manner they settled the Churches of which they were the <sup>a</sup> Founders.

2. Let us, in the next Place, examine our Church by the second Character of an Apostolical Church, its Union and Fellowship with its Pastors and Teachers, those who succeeded the Apostles in the Care of in-

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<sup>a</sup> Non quia Canon solus non sibi ad universa sufficiat, sed quia Verba Divina plerique pro suo arbitratu interpretantes, varias opiniones erroresque concipiant: atque ideo necesse est, ut ad unam Ecclesiastici sensus regulam Scripturæ cælestis intelligentia dirigatur: in iis duntaxat præcipue quæstionibus, quibus totius Catholici Dogmatis fundamenta nitantur. *Vincentii Livinensis Commonitorium*, c. 41.

structing and governing the People committed to their Charge.

'Tis certain, that the most antient Churches, those who were planted by the Apostles themselves, held their Bishops to be the immediate ° *Successors of the Apostles* : We have as great a Consent among the Antient Writers for this, as we have for the Authority of the *Lord's Day*, or for that Collection of Scripture, which we call the *Canon of the New Testament*.

The Adversaries of Episcopacy have been often challenged to produce any Instance of a Church settled *without Bishops*, for above *Fifteen hundred Years* after Christ. They have not been able to produce any Instance of that kind that can give Satisfaction to any Person of ordinary Reading and Judgment.

Our Bishops can derive their Authority from the Times of the Apostles with as an

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° 'Tis certain, that several of those who were Disciples of the Apostles did exercise the Episcopal Office, and had the Care and Oversight of many particular Churches or Congregations: such were Timothy, Titus, Ignatius, Polycarp, Clemens Romanus, Dionysius the Areopagite, and others. What was Ignatius's Judgment concerning the Authority of Bishops, is sufficiently known. Eusebius has given an Account of the Names of those Bishops who were settled by the Apostles in the Government of the principal Churches of which they were Founders, such as Jerusalem, Rome, Ephesus, Crete, Athens, &c. See his Eccl. Hist. l. 2. c. 25. l. 3. c. 4. And all the Antient Writers are unanimous in this Opinion, That the Bishops were Successors of the Apostles. See Iren. lib. 3. c. 3. Tertull. de Præscript. Hæret. c. 32. Cyprian. Ep. 33, 45, and Firmilian ap. Cyprian. Ep. 75. and certainly, they that lived nearest the Times of the Apostles, were the most competent Witnesses of their Practice.

uninterrupted a Succession as any other Church can pretend to do, not excepting the Church of *Rome* it self: whereas we may justly object to our *Dissenting* Teachers, their want of a *lawful Call* to the Ministry; setting themselves up for Teachers in opposition to the Authority of the Bishops of the Church, to whose Office it belongs to send Ministers *into the Lord's Vineyard*: as plainly appears from several Passages in the Epistles to *Timothy* and *Titus*: in these we find those two single Persons are each of them invested with Power to *ordain Elders in every Church*. See *Titus*, Ch. i. ver. 5. 1 *Tim.* v. 22. and 2 *Tim.* ii. 2. They have Authority to call them to an Account for their Behaviour, and to Reward them or Punish them according to their Deserts. See 1 *Tim.* v. 1, 17, 19. Our Bishops do not claim a greater Power than this over the inferior Clergy.

It is worth our observance, what a severe Character Christ gives to such as take upon them the Office of Shepherds without a due Call, *Joh.* x. 1. He calls them *Thieves and Robbers*, and warns the true Sheep of his Flock *not to hear them*, v. 8.

I proceed to apply the *third* and *fourth* Parts of the Character here given of an Apostolical Church, to our own.

It is the Desire of our Church that the Celebration of the Lord's Supper may be reduced to its Primitive Frequency, and nothing



thing would be of greater use to allay the Heats of the several Parties among us, than by often receiving this holy Sacrament, to put our selves in mind of the great Obligations lying upon us to *follow after Things that make for Peace* <sup>p</sup>, and to put on Charity, which is the Bond of Perfectness <sup>q</sup>.

Our *Liturgy*, both with respect to the Administration of that Sacrament, and all other holy Offices, is exactly conformed to the Rules and Directions of the Apostles, and admirably fitted to instruct us to *pray both with the Spirit and with the Understanding also*. The Order and Variety of its Parts is so beautiful and exact; the Matter of its Devotions so weighty and proper, and expressed in so full and significant, and withal so plain and easy a Manner, as to be equally fitted to the Best and the Meanest Capacities. It is composed with that true Spirit of *Catholick Charity*, as to have no private or controverted Opinions interwoven in it: so that it can give no just occasion of Offence to any but such as deny some of the Fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith, and therefore are unworthy of the Name and Fellowship of true Christians.

A few Words may serve to convince any unprejudiced Person, what Advantage a well composed *Form* has for the edifying

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<sup>p</sup> Rom. xiv. 19.

<sup>q</sup> Colos. iii. 14.

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Our *Liturgy*, both with respect to the Administration of that Sacrament, and all other holy Offices, is exactly conformed to the Rules and Directions of the Apostles, and admirably fitted to instruct us to *pray both with the Spirit and with the Understanding also*. The Order and Variety of its Parts is so beautiful and exact; the Matter of its Devotions so weighty and proper, and expressed in so full and significant, and withal so plain and easy a Manner, as to be equally fitted to the Best and the Meanest Capacities. It is composed with that true Spirit of *Catholick Charity*, as to have no private or controverted Opinions interwoven in it: so that it can give no just occasion of Offence to any but such as deny some of the Fundamental Articles of the Christian Faith, and therefore are unworthy of the Name and Fellowship of true Christians.

A few Words may serve to convince any unprejudiced Person, what Advantage a well composed *Form* has for the edifying

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<sup>p</sup> Rom. xiv. 19.

<sup>q</sup> Colos. iii. 14.



both Minister and People, above the *extempore* way of Praying, which some are so fond of.

First, With respect to the Minister, it is easier for him, who is the Mouth of the Congregation, to join devoutly in a Form of Prayer which is already made to his Hands, than when his Mind is distracted with studying what to say next. It is likewise more for the Edification of the Hearers, to join in such Prayers, which, by constant use, are become familiar to them, and in which they may easily go along with the Minister as he repeats them.

Whereas in *extempore* Prayers, the People must first attend to the Words of the Minister, then apply their Mind to the Sense of these Words, then judge how far they are suitable or fit to be joined in, as the subject of their Prayers: and, lastly, offer them up to God with devout Affections: And all this is to be done at one and the same Instant, or else the Hearers are left behind, and can't keep pace with the Quickness and Volubility of the Speaker. And I am persuaded that if those, who are so fond of this *extempore* way of Praying, would but examine themselves, when the Duty is over, what they remember of such Prayers, they could give but a very imperfect Account what was the principal Matter and Contents of them. And if any one's Memory could serve him to carry such a Prayer exactly in his Head, he would find so many  
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Incoherences, and such improper Expressions in it, as would effectually convince him, how little such Prayers have of a true Spirit of Devotion, and such as might recommend them to the Acceptance of God, or promote true Piety in the Hearers. It were to be wished, that they who value themselves for their Abilities in this Kind, would reflect upon that Advice which *Solomon* gives them, *Eccles. Chap. v. ver. 2. Be not rash with thy Mouth, nor let thy Heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in Heaven and thou upon Earth.* Indeed, it seems impossible without a settled Form of Prayer, to preserve not only the Gravity, but even the *Orthodoxy* of publick Worship, and to secure it both from the Levities and Follies of the Injudicious, and from the Extravagances and Impieties of Men that embrace erroneous and unsound Doctrines.

Some think it an Argument of a *Painstaking* Man to utter a long *extempore* Prayer; but surely Pains is no farther commendable than as it appears to be profitable: and any one that impartially considers Things, will find it to be no small Pains to read the Service of the Church and Lessons in a distinct and edifying Manner, and to preach a Sermon afterward.

Having thus shewed how exactly the Characters of an Apostolical Church agree to our own, in respect of the Doctrine therein professed, the Communion and Fellowship

<sup>other</sup> lowship therein maintained, and the Eucharist and <sup>A</sup> Parts of Divine Worship therein performed : I shall, in a few Words, exhort you to continue stedfast in the Communion of a Church so truly Primitive and Apostolical. When Men have made a good Choice, 'tis a great Argument of Wisdom to shew Stedfastness and Resolution in adhering to it. This is *shewing ourselves to be Men, and not being carried away like Children, by every Blast of vain Doctrine*†.

Some think there is no harm in going to a separate Congregation, *to hear a Good Thing*, as they express it. But why should Men do an *Ill Thing*, only in order to hear a *Good* one? I think I may justly call it an *Ill Thing*, for those who are professed Members of our Church to go to separate Meetings; for this is to encourage that Schism and Division, which in their own Judgment they ought to condemn, if they are true Members of the Church they profess to be of. I wish such Persons would consider, that they do this in opposition to the many Obligations the Scripture lays upon us to do our utmost endeavour to promote Unity among Christians. Hear how pathological the Words of St. Paul are to this purpose, 1 Cor. i. 10. *I beseech you, Brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing; and that there be no Divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together*

† Ephes. iv. 16.



*in the same Mind, and in the same Judgment.* And again, *Phil. chap. ii. ver. 1, 2.* *If there be any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies : fulfil ye my Joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, of one Mind.* And chap. iii ver. 16. *Whereto, or, as far as we have attained, let us walk by the same Rule, let us mind the same Thing.* St. Paul reckons Schisms among the *Works of the Flesh*, and he calls the *Corinthians Carnal*, altho' they valued themselves for their Spiritual Gifts, because of the Schisms and Divisions among them, *1 Cor. iii. 3.* Schism is a causeless Separation from the Communion of the Church : so that they who are guilty of it, are led by their Passions and Prejudices, which the Scripture calls Carnal Affections; and not by their Reason or any settled<sup>r</sup> Judgment.

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<sup>r</sup> *It may not be improper to set down Mr. Baxter's Words, wherein he aggravates the Sin of Schism. See his Christian Directory, p. 739, &c. Wherein he tells us, That Schism is a Sin against so many, and clear, and vehement Words of the Holy Ghost, that it is utterly without Excuse; that it is contrary to the very Design of Christ in our Redemption, which was, to reconcile us all to God, and to unite and center us all in him : — that Divisions are as much the Works of the Flesh, as Adulteries and Fornications : that they are the Deformities of the Church, the Lamentation of Friends, and the Scorn of Enemies; the Dishonour of Christ and the Gospel; the great Hindrance of the Conversion and Salvation of the World, and of the Edification of the Members of the Church: that they cherish Pride, and belying others:*

They that encourage separate Assemblies, would do well to consider whether they obey that solemn Injunction of the Apostle, *Rom. xvi. 17. I beseech you, Brethren, mark them who cause Divisions and Offences among you, and avoid them.* And, for God's sake, what need is there of Men's *heaping up Teachers to themselves*, only to gratify *their itching Ears*, when every thing necessary to Salvation is so fully contained in the Prayers, the Lessons, and Instructions of our own Church? But indeed are such Persons sure they shall hear nothing but what is *good* in such Assemblies? Is it not likely several things will be said there to keep up Schism and Division, and to condemn Order and Decency in the Worship of God? Contrary to the Injunction of the Apostle, *1 Cor. xiv. 40. Let all things be done decently and in order.* Who tells us, that *God is not the Author of Confusion, but of Peace*, ver. 33. and that it was the Practice of *all Churches of the Saints* in those Days, to maintain Order and a decent Administration of Holy Things. May we not likewise suppose that

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that they lead directly to Apostasy from the Faith, and shake States and Kingdoms, having a lamentable Influence on the Civil Peace. In a word, *says he*, the Scripture telleth us, *that where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.* And, is not this a lamentable way of reforming some imaginary, or lesser Evils?

some things may be said in those Places to the Disparagement of *bodily Worship* in the Service of God, in direct Contradiction to several Passages of Scripture, which command us to *fall down and kneel before the Lord our Maker*, Psal. xcv. 6. And to *glorify God in our Bodies as well as our Spirits*, 1 Cor. vi. 20. and, in Opposition to the most Eminent Persons recorded in it: such as *So. of the* *lomon* and *Daniel* in the Old Testament, and *St. Paul*, and even our Saviour himself, in the *New*, who are all expressly said to have kneel'd upon their Knees, when they said their <sup>Practi.</sup> Prayers.

To conclude: Whoever seriously considers of the great Obligations lying upon Christians to preserve Unity among themselves, and the unspeakable Mischiefs which attend Schisms and Divisions, which we sufficiently feel by sad Experience: such a one may be easily convinced that nothing else can justify a Separation from the established Church, but its requiring *unlawful Terms of Communion*: A Charge which I am confident can never be made good against the Orders of our Church: whose principal Care it is, that every thing should be performed in God's Service agreeably to his Word, and to the Edification and Benefit of those that attend upon it. And God grant that we

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<sup>t</sup> See 1 Kings viii. 54. Daniel vi. 10. Luke xxii. 41. Acts xx. 36. and xxi. 5.



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may all come to his publick Worship with that due Preparation of Mind, that we may grow in Grace, and receive the fulness of the Blessing of the Gospel of Christ.

*To whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be humbly ascribed all Honour and Glory from this Time forth and for evermore. Amen.*

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